

## *Foods to avoid: 12 to 24 months*

**Low-fat milk:** Most young toddlers need the fat and calories of whole milk for growth and development.

### **Choking hazards**

**Large chunks:** A chunk of food can get stuck in your child's throat. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that you cut food into pieces no larger than 1/2 inch. For example, cut fruits such as grapes, cherry tomatoes, and strawberries into quarters before serving, and shred or finely chop meats, vegetables, and cheeses.

**Raw vegetables:** Soft-cook vegetables such as carrots, celery, and broccoli, and dice, shred, or cut them into pieces no larger than 1/2 inch before serving.

**Nuts and seeds:** Remove seeds and pits from fresh fruit such as watermelon, peaches, plums, and cherries before serving. And don't feed your child nuts or seeds, such as sunflower or pumpkin seeds. Seeds may be too small to choke on but can get stuck in a child's airway and cause an infection.

**Hard or crunchy foods:** Nuts, popcorn, and pretzels are all choking hazards, as are all hard candies and cough drops.

**Sticky foods:** Chewing gum and sticky foods – such as jelly or gummy candies, dried fruit, and marshmallows – can get lodged in your child's throat. Stringy, melted cheese that's not cut up also can be a choking hazard.

**Nutbutter:** Dollops of peanut butter and other nut butters, which can be difficult to swallow, are a choking hazard. Don't serve them on a spoon. Spread nut butter thinly on bread or crackers, or thin it with water, applesauce, or yogurt.

Learn more about [preventing choking in young children](#) and choosing [safe finger foods](#).

## *Foods to avoid: 24 to 48 months*

**Choking hazards:** Even though your child is becoming a more competent eater, there's still a chance he'll choke on his food. Continue to avoid the choking hazards listed above, and discourage your child from walking, talking, watching television, lying down, or doing anything else while eating that might distract him from his meal.

## *Foods to avoid: 4 to 5 years*

**Choking hazards:** Your child is a competent eater now, but you still need to be on the lookout for food she could choke on. Also minimize distractions while she's eating.

## *When do I need to worry about choking hazards?*

From the time your child starts picking up things with her fingers until the age of 4 or 5, you'll need to be vigilant about choking hazards.

Children under 4 are the most likely to choke on something. This is partly because they tend to explore their world by putting things in their mouth.

It's also because they're still learning how to chew and swallow food. Babies as young as 6 or 7 months can bite off a piece of food with their new front teeth. But they won't be able to chew it well until all their molars come in and they've had lots of practice with them, usually by the time they turn 4.

## *Tips for preventing choking in young children*

**Pay attention:** Supervise young children whenever they're eating. (Kids typically can't make any noise to alert you that they're choking.) That means not letting your child eat in the car while you're driving or in the stroller while you're pushing it. And watch to make sure other children don't give your child something he could choke on.

**Keep kids seated:** Make sure your child sits while eating. Don't let kids eat while lying down, walking, playing, or running.